

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (original) A plug for sucking a beverage, comprising:
 - coupling means for coupling said plug to a vessel holding a beverage to be drunk,
 - housing means for housing therein a dissolvable food product, or a praline,
 - supporting and housing means for supporting and housing said praline,
 - an optional praline already housed in said plug,characterized in that
 - the body of the plug substantially comprises a base or bottom portion (A), a middle portion (B) and a top portion (C) said bottom portion (A) including said coupling means (1A) for coupling said plug to the vessel holding the beverage to be drunk,
 - the praline housing means comprise a chamber or seat preferably arranged at the center of the plug and having at least an opening for allowing the beverage to either directly or indirectly exit therefrom,
 - said supporting means comprise praline holding elements formed as a single piece with the plug or as an insert engageable in the plug,

- said praline, housed in the plug, projects from the praline housing chamber or seat,
- at least the top portion (C) of the plug is so contoured to provide an ergonomics bearing of the lips on the plug as a "teat",
- removable outer covering means for covering said praline for coupling to the plug and/or removable diaphragm closing means housed in the plug under said praline are preferably provided, and
- the beverage is delivered
- about a solid praline for a single primary perimetrical delivery of the beverage,
- or additionally through at least an opening through said praline for a simultaneous secondary delivery of the beverage, or
- only through at least an opening through said praline.

2. (original) A plug according to Claim 1, characterized in that between the contour of the praline housing seat or chamber and the contour of said praline a port, preferably circumferential, continuous or in sectors, is provided, said port communicating the inside of the vessel, or of the plug, with the outside for delivering/sucking the beverage (Figures 1-4; 5-7; 8, 9, 10-13; 23-27; 31-34).

3. (previously presented) A plug according to Claim 2, characterized in that

- the praline housing means comprise a cup element having a solid bottom or at least an opening therethrough, wherein, as an

opening is provided, said praline comprises at least a throughgoing hole for providing a secondary delivery of the beverage,

- the supporting means comprise a windowed disc, forming an insert in single-piece with said cup element, or a single piece with the plug, and
- the opening of the praline housing chamber has a contour forming, with the contour of the praline, a perimetrical port, continuous or in sectors, for providing a primary delivery of the beverage (Figures 1-3).

4. (previously presented) A plug according to Claim 2, characterized in that said praline housing and supporting means comprise two diametrically opposite arms, provided in the top portion of the plug,

- that the praline is provided with diametrically opposite supporting blind holes, and with an optional throughgoing hole for providing a secondary delivery of the beverage,
- that the opening of the praline housing chamber has a contour forming, with the contour of the praline, a substantially continuous perimetrical port for providing a primary delivery of the beverage, and
- that, preferably, on the supporting arms praline locating circumferential sectors are formed (Figures 5-7).

5. (previously presented) A plug according to Claim 2, characterized in that the praline housing and supporting means

comprise a rod-like element, thereon said praline is either rotatably or non rotatably fitted,

- that the ends of said rod-like element are contoured and adapted to be housed in correspondingly contoured seats diametrically oppositely formed in the plug, and
- that the opening of the chamber has a contour forming, with the praline contour, a perimetrical continuous port for providing a primary delivery of the beverage (Figures 8-9).

6. (original) A plug according to Claim 1, characterized in that:

- the praline has a substantially flat bottom side and a beverage delivery throughgoing hole,
- the praline housing means comprise a recessed chamber with a substantially flat bottom and a beverage delivery opening in an overlapping relationship with the praline throughgoing hole, and
- the supporting means comprise a plurality of pegs projecting from the housing chamber (Figures 10, 12).

7. (original) A plug according to Claim 6, characterized in that in the praline housing chamber, the beverage delivering opening is defined by a hollow, e.g. cylindrical, lug, thereon is fitted the praline having a corresponding cross-section throughgoing hole (Figures 11, 13).

8. (original) A plug according to Claim 1, characterized in that the praline is provided with a throughgoing

hole and is fitted on a hollow rod or cane forming the praline supporting means,

- that the praline housing chamber has a substantially semispheric configuration, and
- that the opening of the chamber has a diameter adapted to house, by a geometrical and preferably slidable type of engagement, the praline supporting rod, said praline supporting rod having a length substantially extending up to the proximity of the bottom of the bottle or the like, or having a short length slightly greater than the height of the plug (Figures 17, 18, 21, 22; 19, 20).

9. (previously presented) A plug according to Claim 8, characterized in that:

- the praline is fitted on a stick or stem (28),
- a hollow tube element, having an inner cross-section adapted to engage the praline supporting stick projects from a windowed diaphragm of the plug bottom,
- in said tube element a weakening point for allowing an easy manual breaking of said tube for removing said tube and accessing said stick is provided, or said tube is removably supported in the plug body, for example by a screw engagement,
- the opening of the chamber has a contour forming, with the contour of the praline, a substantially continuous perimetrical port for providing a primary delivery of the beverage (Figures 23-30).

10. (previously presented) A plug according to Claim 2, characterized in that:

- the praline supporting means comprise a peg element, arranged in the praline housing chamber and preferably provided with notch-rib or the like means for firmly engaging with a praline fitted on said peg element;
- said peg element comprises supporting means consisting of radial arms in a single piece between the body of the plug and said peg element in a diaphragm with apertures, and
- the opening of the chamber housing the praline is provided with a contour forming, with the contour of the praline, a continuous perimetrical port for delivering the beverage (Figures 31-34).

11. (previously presented) A plug according to Claim 7, characterized in that the bottom of the recess forming the praline housing chamber is preferably slanted with respect to the plug top face,

- that the praline supporting hollow tubular lug is slanted, preferably orthogonally, with respect to the bottom of the praline housing chamber, said praline having preferably a spherical configuration and including a throughgoing opening for fitting on said tubular lug (Figures 35-37).

12. (previously presented) A plug according to Claim 11, characterized in that

-the praline housing means comprise a substantially flat disc element, preferably having a recessed seat for housing the praline bottom,

- the praline supporting tube element is substantially vertically, or orthogonally arranged to said praline bearing disc element arrangement, said praline having, for example, a bell configuration (Figures 38, 39).

13. (previously presented) A plug according to Claim 6, characterized in that said praline supporting means comprise radially extending strip projections having either a like or different length, and

- that the praline bearing substantially flat bottom is preferably provided by a praline holding perimetrical edging (Figures 40-44).

14. (previously presented) A plug according to claim 1, characterized in that said plug is provided with a hygienic inner diaphragm, said inner diaphragm comprising, for example, an aluminium, synthetic, either simple or double material foil, coupled to the plug, for example by a thermosealing coupling, or said diaphragm providing an insert including preferably a gripping tab (Figures 48-50).

15. (previously presented) A plug according to Claim 9, characterized in that said praline supporting stick housing tubular element as a hollow rod provided, at one end thereof, with fixing means, for example a thread, and adapted to be

coupled to fixing counter-means, such as a threaded hole, formed in a slitted diaphragm bottom of the plug (Figure 29A).

16. (currently amended) A plug according to Claim [[12]] 10, characterized in that the praline supporting peg ~~or tube~~ element has a puppet configuration, said peg ~~or tube~~ element being adapted to be removably coupled to supporting means provided in the plug, for example by a thread or the like connection (Figure 34A).

17. (previously presented) A plug according to Claim 7, characterized in that in the contoured top portion of the plug, outside of the praline housing chamber or seat, for example with a flat base, a second ring-like praline, for example of a jelly type is arranged (Figure 10A), and in that a second middle praline can also be provided.

18. (previously presented) A plug according to claim 1, characterized in that said plug is made with a "push-pull" or telescopic pattern.

19. (original) A plug according to Claim 18, characterized in that said plug comprises a top half-plug portion and a bottom half-plug portion, said half-plug portions being telescopically coupled to one another by engaging opposite sleeves provided with inner edged portions to define a maximum opening displacement of the plug, and that in the facing sides of

the top half-plug and bottom half-plug are respectively provided diaphragm walls,

- that the diaphragm wall of the bottom half-plug comprises a tube lug whereas in the diaphragm wall of the top half-plug a flat region coaxially covering said tube element of the bottom half-plug is arranged, and

- that, at the closing position of the half-plugs, the solid portion of the top diaphragm closes the delivery port of the tube lug of the bottom half-plug (Figure 59).

20. (previously presented) A plug according to Claim 19, characterized in that through the diaphragm closing wall of the top half-plug a circular delivery opening is provided, whereas in the diaphragm wall of the top half-plug a cylindrical or frustum lug adapted to close said bottom half-plug delivery opening as the top half-plug is lowered to a closing position thereof is provided (Figure 62).

21. (previously presented) A plug according to claim 1, characterized in that said plug is directly formed on the beverage vessel, or being fixedly coupled to said vessel.

22. (previously presented) A plug according to claim 1, characterized in that the praline is supported to project from the top of the plug, i.e. at a position which can be directly and easily accessed by the tongue upon applying the lips on the plug.

23. (previously presented) A plug according to claim 1, characterized in that the beverage delivery circumferential slot provided between the praline and the seat or chamber housing the latter has preferably a size from 1.5 to 5 mm.

24. (previously presented) A plug according to claim 1, either with or without a praline, characterized in that said plug is packaged to be loosely sold, i.e. independently from the beverage vessel.

25. (previously presented) A praline to be used in a plug according to claim 1 characterized in that

- said praline comprise a solid praline or a praline having at least a beverage delivering throughgoing hole,
- said praline has any desired configurations,
- said praline being individually packaged or packaged in sets, separately from the plug.

26. (original) A praline a according to Claim 25, characterized in that said praline comprise substances which are not included or dissolved in liquids, for example integrating compounds or iron, zinc and the like based substances.

27. (previously presented) A plug according to claim 1, characterized in that said plug has a praline housing seat or chamber contour substantially reproducing the praline contour.

28. (previously presented) A plug according to claim 1, characterized in that said plug is made of a preferably clear food product synthetic material.